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Provider Updates

Periodically, you'll receive "Provider Updates" that will provide significant information you'll need for your day-to-day vocational operations with enough notice so you can accommodate the changes. For example, "Provider Updates" may provide information on system changes (such as billing, voc link connect, etc), and will give providers resource information so that they can accommodate the changes.

Watch for "Provider Bulletins" to arrive in your office when the Department makes policy and/or program changes or policy changes that affect vocational service providers.

Both types of publications can also be viewed at http://www.lni.wa.gov/hsa/hsa_pbs.htm. At this site, you may access all current Provider Bulletins and Provider Updates. These publications cover topics related to vocational services:

- Directly* (e.g., Vocational Provider Performance Measurement or Job Modification and Pre-Job Modification) or
- Indirectly* (e.g., Hearing Aid Policy).

CACO Update

The Vocational Provider Performance Report was to have been published in July 2001. However, Data Warehouse programming and testing continues because programming could not begin for the new data collection system until implementation was completed.

The department plans to publish the next performance report by mid-November 2001. Data in the report will display only branch-level information calculated from closures beginning July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001.

The report published in November will be in the same format as previous reports. However, it will include out-of-state CACO ratings. This report will also show Eligibility and Conditional ratings that Claim Managers will also receive. The report will be published on the Internet www.lni.wa.gov/has/vocational.htm rather than being mailed out since we must send it to all registered vocational providers.

Claim Manager referral screens continue to use the report that included referral closures from January 1, 2000 to December 30, 2000. Referral screens will not change until the new report is published in November 2001.

Watch for updates about the performance report on the web site www.lni.wa.gov/has/vocational.htm and in future Provider Updates.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact Jim Kammerer at kamj235@lni.wa.gov or (360) 902-6809 or Mary Kaempfe at kaem235@lni.wa.gov or (360) 902-6811.

Payment Update

New Codes

The department has developed five new codes for use by vocational providers and other providers delivering services related to a vocational referral. The codes will be effective for dates of service beginning June 1, 2001. The codes will be payable, (i.e., they will become active in the department's bill payment system) beginning September 24, 2001. Bills submitted prior to this date with the codes will not pay and will have to be resubmitted.

The codes are:

Code & Description	Is specific CM authorization required?	Which provider Type(s) can bill this code?
0896V – Ferry Charges	No	Vocational Counselor
0897V – Hotel Charges*	Yes	Intern Forensic Specialist
0391R – Travel/wait (non-voc)	Yes	Occupational Therapist
0392R – Mileage (non-voc)	Yes	Physical Therapist
0393R – Ferry Charges (non-voc)	Yes	Physical Therapy Clinic Miscellaneous Provider

* Available only for out-of-state providers doing out-of-state referrals.

Codes 0896V, 0897V, and 0393R are payable By Report, and a receipt must be placed in the case file for documentation. Code 0391R pays at \$4.05 per unit. Code 0392R pays at the standard federal rate per mile, similar to codes 0893V and 0894V.

Recall that the department requires billing for services in units, in increments of 6 minutes per unit, or 10 units per hour.

Ancillary Services Reminder

As a reminder to vocational providers who deliver ancillary services on vocational referrals assigned to other providers, if the provider resides in a different firm (that is, has a different payee provider number than you), you cannot bill as a vocational provider (provider type 68). You must either use another provider number that is authorized to bill the ancillary services codes (for example, billing as an occupational therapist or a physical therapist), or obtain a miscellaneous services provider number (provider type 97) and bill the appropriate codes for those services.

Change in Provider Specialty

Vocational providers are reminded that requests for change in provider specialty must be submitted to the department, and that the change is not effective until the department has approved and processed the request. Example: An intern seeking upgrade to VRC status must submit a new Vocational Provider Application. The department will notify the applicant of their new status after the application has been processed. The intern must continue to maintain intern status (in regard to billing, signing of documents, etc.) until the date of the department's letter that specifies the change has taken place. This process applies to all requests for change in specialty, such as a VRC who now meets forensic specialist requirements, and is seeking approval of that specialty by the department.

In the case of an intern seeking upgrade, the department will issue a new provider number for the VRC specialty. All other changes in specialty will not require the issuing of a new provider number.

Resolution of Existing Referrals When a Vocational Provider Leaves a Firm

In some cases, a vocational referral must close if the assigned vocational provider (VRC) ends their association with the firm (payee) provider. An example of this is when a VRC changes firms, and the referral had originally been assigned to the firm, and not directly to the VRC.

The department expects to be notified if the vocational provider assigned to a referral leaves a firm. Following are guidelines for department notification:

- A. For referrals made to the firm and assigned to the VRC: It is the responsibility of the vocational manager of the firm to notify the department claim manager(s) of the change in status for that referral. It is the responsibility of the VRC assigned to the referral, to close the referral on voc link connect.
- B. For referrals made directly to the VRC: These referrals will be transferred by the claim manager and move with the VRC to the new firm. The VRC is responsible for notifying the claim manager of their new status, and should be prepared to inform the claim manager of the payee provider ID of the new firm, as well as the VRC's new service provider ID associated with that firm.

Under scenario A, it is not appropriate for the VRC assigned to the referral(s) to contact the claim manager(s) for the purpose of informing them of a change in employment. The resolution (i.e., re-referral) of the referral after it is closed is at the sole discretion of the claim manager.

Self Insured Vocational Referrals

Vocational providers who provide services to injured workers covered by self-insured organizations are subject to the provisions of Chapter 296-19A WAC (with some exceptions as specifically noted in the WAC) as well as RCW and applicable department policy. These providers are also subject to the provisions of WAC 296-15-500 and 510.

Vocational providers who provide services to injured workers covered by self-insured employers are not required to have voc link connect. However, for those vocational providers who work on referrals covered by self insured employers, and who also have voc link connect, please note that you will see your self insured referral show up on your voc link connect referral screen, when a rehabilitation plan is received by the self insured section of the department. You need do nothing on the system with this referral. It will disappear from the screen upon plan completion. Please note also that vocational referrals covered by self-insured employers are not subject to, nor included in, the CACO performance measure utilized by the State Fund.

Vocational Resources

The department's vocational services web site is www.lni.wa.gov/hsa/vocational.htm.

The department's intention for the web site is to give providers access to all of the information that they need in regard to providing vocational services to Washington State Injured Workers. At this site you will find (among other topics):

- Links to RCW, WAC and department policy
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions regarding the new vocational rules
- Vocational Provider Application, and Firm and Individual Change forms
- Links to report formats and cover sheets, as well as supplemental forms
- Information on programs within the department
- Much more

Be sure to check the "What's New" area of the web site on a regular basis, for up to date information, changes, etc.

Use of Work Products Developed prior to June 1, 2001

The requirements for job analysis and labor market surveys performed on or after June 1, 2001 are identified in Chapter 296-19A WAC. *Work products such as job analyses and labor market surveys developed prior to June 1, 2001 that do not meet these requirements should not be utilized in a closing report.* Example: The new rules specify that only a vocational provider can perform a labor market survey. This was not the case prior to June 1, 2001. As of June 1, 2001 it is a violation of rule to submit a labor market survey performed by a person who is not a vocational provider.

Example: The new rules specify (among other requirements) that a job analysis must note the name of the vocational provider who completed the job analysis, as well as the signature of the vocational provider who is submitting the job analysis for review. A job analysis that does not meet these requirements, as well as the other requirements for job analyses, could be in violation of rule. Providers are urged to review sections-140 and-170 of the new rules, as well as other sections pertaining to qualifications, in order to determine what information must be included in a labor market survey, what information must be included in a job analysis, and the qualifications requirements for vocational providers.

The VSM

The Department is working on a web-based manual called the VSM. This document replaces the Vocational Services Handbook and contains all current vocational services information. The Vocational Services Manual will be one-stop shopping for the new WACs, the Vocational WAC Guidelines, Provider Bulletins, Provider Updates, claims policies that impact vocational services, and sample forms.

Job offers

The department rescinded interim policy 6.42 on job offers in September 2000. The department has developed a guideline that covers the key decisions that are needed when a worker declines a valid job offer. The guideline can be accessed at the vocational services web site

www.lni.wa.gov/has/vocational.htm

L&I policy on marketing claim managers for referrals

The department wishes to reiterate its policy regarding the marketing of claim managers. Policy 6.11 states that, “it is not appropriate for private firms or providers to market the claims staff directly”. The department interprets this policy to specifically mean that vocational providers should only engage in communication with claim managers or other department staff, that is claim specific. Any action or communication that is construed as marketing, and reported to PSRS as a complaint, will be investigated as a potential violation of the policy.

Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group (VTSG)

L&I established the Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group (VTSG) in 1997. The group’s purpose is to maintain ongoing communication between L&I management and vocational rehabilitation providers who work with the State’s workers’ compensation program. The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholder group are to:

- Give feedback on proposals related to current and emerging issues; and
- Serve as a professional resource on vocational rehabilitation issues to help inform the department’s policy and program decision-making.

In the past, the department worked exclusively with contracted providers. With implementation of the new WAC 296-19A, which replaced contracts with WACs and shifted the performance measures to individual VRCs, L&I is now considering how to include individual VRCs’ perspectives in its decision-making.

VTSG meetings are open to the public with time for public comments scheduled at the end of each meeting. The meeting schedule, agendas and approved minutes are posted on L&I's Vocational Services website under: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/hsa/vocational.htm>.

Outcomes Update

New Outcome Recommendations Available

Since the implementation of program changes to vocational rehabilitation on June 1, 2001 the department has identified the need for several new recommendation and outcome codes. In its series of preparatory workshops conducted in the Spring 2001, the department explained its new approach to the use of recommendation and outcome codes. Rather than continuing to use broad “catch-all” categories for vocational outcomes the department wanted to, more clearly, indicate the circumstances of the referral in the process of assigning an outcome.

In addition to the new outcome recommendations implemented on June 1, the recommended outcomes below will be available to the vocational counselor when submitting the closing report at the conclusion of services:

Recommendation Code and Description	For which types of referrals is it available?	Comments
ADM9—Worker deceased or cannot be located	EI, AWA, PD, PI, Forensic	
SNA3—Not able to work or participate: unaccepted conditions or factors	EI, AWA, PD, PI, Forensic	Already available for all other referral types, added to EI
ADMA—VRC declines referral	EI, AWA, PD, PI, Forensic	
PLN7—Plan Failed	PI	
ATW3—IW turns down EOI's offer of new permanent job	EI, AWA, PD, Forensic	Already available for EI and AWA referral types, added to PD
ATW4—IW turns down EOI's offer of new temporary job	EI, AWA, PD, Forensic	Already available for EI and AWA referral types, added to PD

EI – Early intervention

PD – Plan development

AWA – Ability to work assessment

PI – Plan implementation

Voc Link Connect

The department has made an important change to Voc Link Connect, the system utilized by the department to transmit referral and outcome information. Effective immediately, claim managers will be able to utilize the text area on VOCC to make comments when making a vocational referral. The comments will remain “read only” on the VRC and Firm review update screens for that claim. The VRC and Firm will not be able to return comments or update on the comment line. The comments made by the claim manager will also show up on RLOG as a “V” type message. Vocational providers should review the comments section of every new referral to determine if there is a special message from the claim manager, accompanying the referral.